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SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY:  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOD SURVEY

by

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### Abstract

This report describes the development of a survey instrument to assess the incidence and causes of sexual harassment in the United States Military. The report begins with a general description of the scope of the problem of sexual harassment across different work settings. Subsequently, an analysis of the legal issues is presented. Then some selected scientific studies of sexual harassment are scrutinized. This is followed by documentation of the scope of the problem in the U.S. Military. Finally, some of the major issues to be addressed in the proposed DoD study are described. The content of the DoD survey was developed by the Defense Manpower Data Center in collaboration with the author while the author served as a Summer Faculty Researcher at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.

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## SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOD SURVEY

Sexual harassment is a widespread problem in business (Terpstra & Baker, 1988; Guteck, 1985), government (McIntyre & Renick, 1982; United States Merit Systems Protection Board [USMSPB], 1981, 1988), academia (Benson & Thomson, 1983; McKinney & Howard, 1986; Wilson & Kraus, 1983; Yates, 1987), and the military (Department of Defense, 1988). Sexual harassment has important consequences for its victims and the organizations in which it occurs (Terpstra, 1986). Personal costs for the victims include detrimental psychological effects (Benson & Thomson, 1982), as well as a loss of tangible job benefits (Faley, 1982). Costs for the organization include reduced individual and work group productivity (USMSPB, 1981, 1988), plus the legal costs and public relations problems created by law suits (Baxter, 1987; Garvey, 1986). Sexual harassment has been both a subject for litigation and a phenomenon for social scientific research. This report begins with a discussion of the legal issues surrounding sexual harassment. Subsequently, some selected studies of sexual harassment in the social sciences are reviewed. Finally, a proposed study of sexual harassment in the military is described.

### Legal Issues

Our understanding of what legally constitutes sexual harassment in the civilian sector has been refined since the first judicial interpretation that sexual harassment constitutes discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1977 (Barnes v. Costle). Title VII prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, sex, religion or national origin. Sexual harassment is argued to constitute sex discrimination because it is behavior that is directed to an individual on the basis of the person's gender. Thus, an employer who propositions his female, but not his male employees, may commit sexual harassment because he is discriminating against his employees on the basis of gender. This rationale has the interesting implication that bisexual harassment (e.g., an employer harasses his male and female employees equally) may not be illegal under Title VII (Greenlaw & Kohl, 1981), although such actions might involve tort liability (Baxter, 1987).

The first cases to be litigated involved incidents where there were tangible job benefits related to the harassment (Cohen, 1987). The prototype for these cases involved a situation in which a supervisor used his/her power in an organization

to sexually exploit employees (Baxter, 1987). Thus, acceptance of sexual behavior was a term or condition of an employee's hiring, continued employment, or advancement.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Guidelines on Sexual Harassment issued in 1980 clearly indicate that such quid pro quo sexual exploitation is considered sexual harassment. Another form of sexual harassment is also described in these guidelines. This has become known as "hostile environment" sexual harassment. In these cases it is not necessary to demonstrate that the victim has experienced any sort of tangible economic losses as the result of sexual harassment (Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson, 1986). Sexual behavior which "has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile work environment" is also considered sexual harassment. Also implied in the concept of "hostile environment" is the idea that the sexual behaviors of others can constitute sexual harassment. In the recent case of Broderick v. Ruder (1988), the sexual behaviors of others in a workplace were alleged to play a significant role in creating a hostile work environment for the plaintiff, even though these behaviors were only observed by the plaintiff as a third party.

The EEOC (1980) guidelines and most court opinions (Baxter, 1987) acknowledge the importance of individual interpretations regarding what is considered sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual behavior. What is considered unwelcome by one person may not be considered so by another. Determination of whether sexual harassment has taken place must be considered on a case-by-case basis. The basic criteria to establish "hostile environment" sexual harassment seem to be primarily that sexual behavior has taken place and it was unwelcome. However, another crucial issue that involves interpretation is the degree of seriousness of the behavior. Was the sexual behavior sufficiently pervasive so as to alter the conditions of employment and create an abusive work environment? In some cases, the courts have held that trivial and merely annoying vulgarity, even if it is a common experience in a particular workplace, does not necessarily constitute sexual harassment (Baxter, 1987). In other cases, the courts have held that a single sexual remark (not a quid pro quo proposition) might constitute sexual harassment ("Judge: 1 remark is enough," 1983).

While the courts are not legally bound to follow the EEOC guidelines on sexual harassment, they generally do follow them to a great extent (Baxter, 1987). The current policy statements on sexual harassment in the various branches of the military are based upon these same guidelines (Parker, 1981).

A recent study by Terpstra and Baker (1988) reports an analysis of the relationship of various evidentiary factors to the outcomes of sexual harassment cases. The sample consisted of

81 cases filed with the Illinois Department of Human Rights over a 2-year period. While the sample was relatively small in this study and possibly subject to regional biases, the study helps to capture some of the factors that courts consider important in establishing sexual harassment. Three factors emerged as significantly associated with a favorable outcome for the plaintiff: type of behavior, presence/absence of witnesses, and whether the complainant had previously notified the employer of the alleged sexual harassment.

With regard to the type of behavior, Terpstra and Baker (1988) coded behaviors into two classes according to their degree of perceived seriousness. Sexual assault, unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature, or sexual propositions linked to employment decisions were classified as high in perceived seriousness. Sexual propositions unlinked to the job, requests for dates, offensive language or remarks, or unwanted verbal attention were classified as less serious behaviors. The analysis showed that behaviors of the first type were more likely to result in court decisions favoring the plaintiff. It is interesting to note the behaviors falling into Terpstra and Baker's less serious category seem to be generally the "hostile environment" form of sexual harassment. They do not necessarily involve tangible job benefits and they may not be personally directed to the plaintiff. Thus, claims of the "hostile environment" form of sexual harassment seem to be more difficult to establish in the legal arena.

#### The USMSPB Studies: 1980 and 1987

One of the first scientific studies of sexual harassment was the USMSPB (1981) survey of Federal employees, conducted in 1980. This study used a disproportionately stratified random sample of 23,000 civilian Federal employees. There was a return rate of 85%. While other surveys had been conducted prior to this time, they typically used highly selected convenience samples (Safran, 1976). Since the USMSPB (1981) survey serves as a benchmark for sexual harassment studies, it will be described in some detail.

The survey instrument itself consisted of seven sections. These sections addressed the following topics: (a) opinions about issues related to sexual harassment, (b) perceptions of what kinds of behaviors constitute sexual harassment, (c) opinions about what can be done to reduce sexual harassment, (d) personal experiences of sexual harassment, (e) personal experiences of being accused of sexually harassing someone, (f) general information about one's work environment, and (g) general demographic information.

The USMSPB (1981) survey focused upon six types of potentially sexually harassing behavior derived from the Office of Personnel Management's policy definition of sexual harassment. These included: (a) uninvited pressure for sexual favors, (b) uninvited and deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering,

or pinching, (c) uninvited sexually suggestive looks or gestures, (d) uninvited letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature, (e) uninvited pressure for dates, and (f) uninvited sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions. In section 2, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they considered each behavior sexually harassing when it was performed by (a) a supervisor or (b) another worker. In section 4, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they had experienced each behavior over a 24-month period plus the involvement of each behavior in a particularly significant personal experience of sexual harassment.

Before describing some of the results of the USMSPB (1981) survey, some comments seem to be in order. The focal behaviors in this study were derived from an existing policy at a time when legal precedents and the EEOC guidelines were in their infancy. One key distinction that probably should have been included in asking people about their perceptions of and experiences with different behaviors would seem to be whether the behavior in question was linked to employment decisions. Only in one subsection of the personal experiences section (4) were respondents asked about the anticipated or received consequences of their most significant experience. While it is not necessary to demonstrate that a behavior is linked to employment decisions in order for it to be judged legally to be sexually harassing, the results of the Terpstra and Baker (1988) analysis and the experiences of many lawyers who try such cases (Baxter, 1987) suggest that cases involving behaviors that are unlinked to employment decisions are less likely to be decided in favor of the plaintiff.

Another potential problem with the behaviors examined in the USMSPB (1981) study is that they focus largely upon dyadic interactions in which the behavior in question has a specific intended target. In section 4, the behaviors are described to the respondents as "sexual attention" they have experienced. This precludes the third party sort of sexual harassment possible in the "hostile environment" concept.

Another possible criticism of the behaviors assessed in this survey concerns the aggregations of the behaviors. Are "letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature" necessarily part of an equivalence class? From the report of the research, the criteria used in establishing the specific aggregates are not made clear. A related point is that these policy-derived behaviors may not include some important behaviors that are part of the experiences of people who claim to have been sexually harassed.

With all of these points in mind, let us now turn to some selected findings of this survey. The existing report of the USMSPB (1981) is largely confined to summary statistics. With

the exception of some emerging secondary analyses of these data (Fain & Anderton, 1987), no analyses of many potentially interesting correlational relationships have been reported at this time. Among the more important findings, the results show that sexual harassment is a relatively common experience among Federal employees. Forty-two percent of the female and 15% of the male employees reported having experienced one or more of the various forms of uninvited sexual attention over a 2-year period (1978-1979). Male respondents tended to rate most behaviors as less harassing than women. While all of the specific behaviors examined in the survey were viewed as more harassing when the perpetrator was a supervisor as compared to a co-worker by both men and women, victims reported that the person (or persons) who sexually harassed them in their most significant experience was more likely to be a co-worker (65% for women and 75% for men) than a supervisor (37% for women and 14% for men). (Note: some reported more than one party bothered them.) However, those who were sexually harassed by supervisors were more likely to foresee serious consequences resulting from the sexual harassment. The most common response of the victims of sexual harassment was to ignore the behavior or avoid the harasser. Very few filed formal complaints. Finally, the survey found that very, very few individuals admitted to having been accused of sexual harassment.

Fain and Anderton (1987) report a secondary analysis of the USMSPB (1981) data in which they examined the relationships of various organizational and personal factors to victims' experiences of the various behaviors in the survey. It is important to note that this analysis used only the data of female respondents. Logistic regression analyses revealed that diffuse status characteristics such as marital status, age, and, to some extent, race were the strongest predictors of whether or not female respondents experienced the six types of harassment in the USMSPB (1981) survey. Organizational context factors, such as the woman's status as a supervisor, and characteristics of the work group were less strongly related to harassment experiences.

In 1988, the USMSPB issued a report of a follow-up study. This one was conducted in 1987 and asked a cross section of 13,000 Federal workers (the return rate was 66%) about their experiences of sexual harassment during 1985-1986. Sections of the 1980 questionnaire which asked respondents their opinions about issues related to sexual harassment and whether they had been accused of sexually harassing someone were eliminated from this version. For the most part, the results from this survey looked very similar to those of the 1980 survey. One difference was that five out of six of the behaviors were considered more sexually harassing by the 1987 than the 1980 sample. The only exception was that "letters and calls" were considered more harassing by the 1980 than the 1987 sample. These patterns held across men and women and when the perpetrator was a supervisor as well as co-worker. The USMSPB (1988) suggested that this pattern may reflect an increased public awareness of sexual harassment in



the 1987 sample. No explanation of the anomaly of "letters and calls" was offered.

The percentages of women and men who report having experienced some form of sexual harassment in the 2-year periods were almost identical across the two studies. In the 1987 survey, 42% of the women and 14% of the men report having experienced some form of "uninvited sexual attention" in the Federal workplace. However, there were some potentially interesting differences in the types of behaviors experienced across the two samples. For both women and men, there was a decrease in the extent to which they experienced "pressure for dates" and an offsetting increase in the extent to which they experienced "touching, leaning over, cornering or pinching." One possible reason for these changes is that pressure for dates may be a more obvious form of sexual harassment and one that may be more easily observed by potential witnesses. Thus, in response to the greater public awareness of the issue, those who sexually harass may have come to prefer more subtle forms of harassment like touching. Pryor (1987) has suggested that it is easy for those who sexually harass to exploit the ambiguity inherent in touching someone in a sexual way.

In both the 1981 and the 1988 reports, the USMSPB tried to estimate the cost of sexual harassment to the Federal Government over the 2-year periods covered by the surveys. In the 1981 report, this estimate was approximately \$189 million. This figure represents the expenses involved in: (a) replacing employees who left their jobs because of sexual harassment, (b) paying medical insurance claims for service to employees who sought professional help because of physical or emotional stress brought on by their experiences, (c) paying sick leave to employees who missed work, and (d) absorbing the costs associated with individual and work group productivity (p. 76).

In the 1988 report the estimate rose to \$267 million. The increase is largely attributable to salary increases for Federal employees across the two assessment periods.

In summary, we may conclude that these studies demonstrate that sexual harassment in the Federal workplace is a pervasive problem with important consequences. Most of the criticisms suggested above about the USMSPB studies would suggest that the extent of sexual harassment might be underestimated by these surveys. A recent study by Yates (1987) used the questionnaire developed for the 1980 survey with a sample of employees in selected academic institutions. Yates found comparable results with regard to incidence rates and many other major findings of the USMSPB (1981) survey. Thus, many of the ideas contained within these surveys seem transferable to other organizational settings.

## Sexual Harassment in the Department of Defense

The USMSPB (1981, 1988) surveys included Civil Service employee subjects from most major branches of the Federal government, but it excluded people in the active military. Of the 24 Federal agencies mentioned in the 1988 report, the three major branches of the military (Air Force, Army, and Navy) scored in the upper quartile of sexual harassment incidents.

While no overall study of sexual harassment among active military personnel across the various branches of the military has been undertaken at this time, evidence of the pervasiveness and seriousness of this problem in the military has accumulated from numerous sources. Anecdotal accounts from career military women (Abed, 1985; Alsmeyer, 1981; Holm, 1982) suggest that sexual harassment of military women by peers, subordinates, and supervisors is a common occurrence.

Service specific surveys have generally supported this contention. For example, Reilly (1980) surveyed 90 enlisted women in the Navy concerning their experiences of verbal and physical sexual harassment from peers and superiors. Reilly found that 90% of those surveyed had experienced verbal and 61% had experienced physical sexual harassment from peers while in the Navy. Fifty-six percent had experienced verbal and 28% had experienced physical harassment from supervisors. In addition, 60% and 36% reported having been bothered by repeated requests for dates (after initial refusals) by peers and supervisors, respectively. Reilly also reported data indicating that the experience of sexual harassment negatively influenced Navy women's attitudes toward their work environments and desires to reenlist.

Another survey examined the sexual harassment experiences of over 12,000 enlisted men and women in the U.S. Air Force (Canny, 1985). The sexual harassment questions were part of a larger organizational assessment study (Headquarters, United States Air Force: USAF Special Study Team, 1985) delivered to the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives. This study found that 27% of the female and 7% of the male respondents report having experienced sexual harassment over a 4-week period. In the same period, 6.2% of the women and 1.7% of the men reported having experienced physical harassment.

One potential source of data regarding the frequency of sexual harassment in the military would seem to be the records of complaints. However, the use of such data is hampered by a lack of consistency in the way in which the different Services report sexual harassment statistics (Department of Defense, 1988). Focusing upon one branch of service in which the complaint statistics seem most easily interpreted (the Air Force), it appears that sexual harassment complaints were the most frequent of all confirmed equal opportunity complaints in the first half of fiscal year 1988 and in all of fiscal year 1987 (USAF Social

Actions Program Statistical Summary, 1987, 1988). Thus, confirmed complaints about sexual harassment were more frequent than confirmed complaints about discrimination on the basis of race, sex (other than sexual harassment), ethnicity/national-origin, religion, or age.

Recent reports by the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) document numerous experiences of sexual harassment by women throughout the Armed Services (Davis, 1987; Halloran, 1987). The DACOWITS reports suggest that sexual harassment may be particularly problematic for women serving overseas. In order to address the concerns raised by the DACOWITS reports, the Secretary of Defense established a task force on women in the military. Among other recommendations, the task force suggested that a DoD-wide survey be conducted of the incidence of sexual harassment in the military and the effectiveness of programs to combat it. As the structure of this survey evolved, it became obvious that comparisons of the findings to the existing USMSPB (1981, 1988) data would be desirable. Thus, the contents of the DoD survey were developed to make these comparisons possible. At the same time, the apparent shortcomings of the USMSPB studies and recent advances in scientific studies of sexual harassment made it necessary to expand and alter the content of the USMSPB surveys. Some of the major differences between the USMSPB survey and the proposed DoD survey are addressed below.

#### Issues for DoD Survey on Sexual Harassment

##### Sexually Harassing Behaviors

One goal of the DoD survey is to assess the incidence rates of sexual harassment across the various branches of the military. A crucial factor of such an assessment is obviously the range of behaviors one wishes to classify as sexually harassing. Also crucial to interpreting incidence rates is a comparison to existing data. Is sexual harassment more or less frequent in the military than in other settings? In order to make comparisons possible, the DoD survey will utilize the same six behaviors used in the USMSPB (1981, 1988) surveys.

As in the USMSPB studies, subjects will be asked to estimate the frequency with which they have experienced each of the six behaviors (plus actual or attempted rape or sexual assault) in the last 24 months. In addition, they will be asked whether they have ever experienced such uninvited sexual attention while serving in the active military.

Also as in the previous surveys, respondents will be asked to rate the extent to which they view each behavior as sexually harassing when performed by a supervisor and by a co-worker. In addition, subjects will be asked to make similar ratings with four other possible perpetrators: someone of higher rank, some-

one of lower rank, someone of equal rank, and two or more people acting together. The inclusion of these additional perpetrators was intended to reflect the diversity of military experience with authority relationships and to include the possible role of group harassment. Because people in the active military are essentially on call 24 hours per day, work related sexual harassment could potentially occur in a variety of different settings not typical of a civilian's job experiences. To deal with this issue, respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they believe each of the six behaviors is sexually harassing when performed by each of the five different perpetrators across five possible settings: in an office building, in an open work area, on base grounds, in the field/at sea, and off base.

As argued above, the USMSPB (1981, 1988) behaviors focus upon dyadic interaction where the behavior has a specific intended target. This narrow focus excludes many "hostile environment" forms of sexual harassment where the behaviors are not directed at the respondent. The DoD survey tried to overcome this deficiency by adding questions concerning: (a) the sexual interactions of other people in the respondent's work group not directed to the respondent and (b) impersonal sexual behaviors that occur in the work setting. Behaviors of the first type were designed to parallel those in the section which asked about uninvited sexual attention directed toward the respondent (e.g., "requests for dates or actual dating" paralleled "pressure for dates"). Behaviors of the second type included things such as "sexually oriented entertainment in the service clubs," an impersonal sexual behavior noted in the DACOWITS report (Moore, 1987). In the DoD survey, respondents were asked whether they have observed such behaviors in the military work environment and whether they personally considered them sexually harassing.

#### Characteristics of Men Who Sexually Harass

Policy definitions of sexual harassment do not specify the sex of the perpetrator or victim of sexual harassment. While sexual harassment of men by women does occur (Cleland, 1982), as does homosexual harassment (Anderson, 1983), the vast majority of victims are women and the vast majority of perpetrators are men (Guteck, 1985). A consistent finding across studies interviewing victims of sexual harassment is that men who sexually harass are reported to have reputations for sexually harassing behaviors (Perry, 1983). This suggests that individual differences in attitudes and personality characteristics may importantly contribute to the occurrence of sexual harassment. This view of the causes of sexual harassment seems to be shared by the recent DACOWITS report (Davis, 1987) which suggests that "macho" male attitudes contribute to the occurrence of sexual harassment in the military.

Yet the USMSPB (1981) survey did not include any measures designed to tap these qualities of men who sexually harass. The survey did ask respondents whether they had been accused of sexually bothering someone in the last 12 months. From this it was concluded: "Few Federal workers admitted that they have been accused of sexual harassment--far fewer than the numbers who have claimed to have been harassed. Most men who do report having been accused felt the charge was unfair" (p. 62).

Thus, from these findings we see that there are problems inherent in trying to get sexual harassers to "report on themselves." Yet, there still may be a way to study characteristics of men who are likely to sexually harass from self-reports. Pryor (1987) reports the development of a self-report scale that measures the Likelihood to Sexually Harass (LSH). In this scale, men are asked to imagine themselves in situations in which they have an opportunity to sexually exploit attractive women without concern for possible reprisals. In each situation the respondents are asked to rate the likelihood of their behaving in a sexually exploitive way. Pryor chose this form of behavior because surveys tend to show a general consensus that such quid pro quo behavior is regarded as sexually harassing (Rielly, et al., 1982). Across a series of studies, Pryor found relationships between LSH and a variety of attitudinal and personality characteristics. Pryor found that men who are high in LSH tend to hold adversarial sexual beliefs, to find it difficult to assume others' perspectives, and to endorse traditional sex-role stereotypes. Finally, Pryor showed that high LSH men tend to behave in sexually exploitive ways when their motives can be disguised by situational excuses.

While it is unfeasible to include the LSH scale in its entirety on the DoD survey, two opinion items which were designed to tap this construct are included. Using these items, the relationships of LSH to various personal and demographic characteristics can be examined. In this way, a profile of military personnel who are high in the likelihood to sexually harass may be constructed. This might help equal opportunity advisers anticipate sexual harassment problems and suggest groups toward whom interventions might be directed.

In addition, the DoD survey includes several other opinion items designed to assess attitude and belief structures thought to underlie the likelihood to sexually harass as indicated by previous literature (Pryor, 1987). Among the constructs assessed are adversarial sexual beliefs (Burt, 1980), attitudes toward women (Spence & Helmreich, 1978), hostility toward women (Malamuth, 1986), and perspective-taking skill (Davis, 1980). In each case, items were selected from standard scales which showed high item-total correlations (or factor loadings) and modified for current use.

The DoD survey also uses another technique to assess the behaviors of people who may have potentially performed sexually harassing behaviors. Respondents are asked the frequency with which they have performed the six specific behaviors assessed in the other parts of the survey. Here these behaviors are described in a non-evaluative manner. For example, they are asked the frequency with which they have "requested dates or actually dated" other members of their work group in the last 24 months. They are also asked to indicate the extent to which recipients reacted to their behaviors in a negative or positive fashion. These questions are included in addition to the USMSPB questions asking respondents whether they have actually been accused of sexual harassment in hopes of ascertaining self-reports of sexual harassment in a less obtrusive manner.

### Understanding the Role of Interpretation

One of the most obvious problems in studying sexual harassment involves the different interpretations of what constitutes sexual harassment. What is considered sexually harassing by some may not be considered so by others. Whether a particular behavior is seen as innocuous and tolerable, offensive, or threatening may be related to the particular motives that are attributed to the person exhibiting the behavior. Why did the person perform this behavior? This point was borne out in the original USMSPB (1981) survey. Sixty percent of the female and 59% of the male respondents disagreed with the statement: "I would call something sexual harassment even if the person doing it did not mean to be offensive" (Question #11).

Pryor and his colleagues (1985; Pryor & Day, 1988) have suggested that causal attributions are important in interpreting whether a behavior is more or less sexually harassing. Behaviors that are attributed to a perpetrator's enduring sexual intentions are perceived as more sexually harassing than behaviors that are attributed to some provocation from a target (Rielly, Carpenter, Dull, & Bartlett, 1982) or to other situational factors. Jensen and Guteck (1982) have also shown that victims of sexual harassment who attribute responsibility for the incident to themselves are less likely to report it to anyone in authority or talk to others about it.

From the perspective of many feminist writers (e.g., Farley, 1978) sexual harassment is essentially an abuse of male power. Sexual harassment is used by men to keep women in their place. In many ways, Farley's arguments parallel Brownmiller's (1975) analyses of the social functions of rape. It would be interesting to see if victims of sexual harassment share the view that power motives underlie the behaviors of someone who has sexually harassed them.

The DoD survey assesses victims' attributions regarding a variety of possible reasons for the most significant uninvited sexual attention they experienced. These include: a power motive, hostility, sexual interest, misunderstanding, insensitivity, a desire for social approval, sex role stereotyping, ignorance, and an attempt at humor. Victims are also asked about self-attributions with measures of behavioral and characterological self-blame (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). A victim's attributions are important because they may mediate her/his reactions to the behavior and perceptions of its severity.

One finding that emerged from the USMSPB (1981) survey and many subsequent studies is that men tend to view a variety of different behaviors as less sexually harassing than women. Pryor and Day (1988) have found that women tend to attribute more threat or hostility to sexual behaviors (like comments on physical appearance) than men. Abbey (1982) and others (Shotland & Craig, 1988) have found that men tend to attribute more sexual motives for casual cross-sex interactions than women. Since most perpetrators of sexual harassment are men and most victims are women, it seems likely that perpetrators and victims may view the perpetrator's behavior differently. These differences in interpretation could be important contributors to the perpetuation of sexual harassment.

In the proposed DoD survey, people who perform various sexual behaviors are asked about their reasons for performing these behaviors. The assessment of the frequency of different sexual behaviors was mentioned in the discussion above on characteristics of sexual harassers. The list of reasons includes the same ones asked victims of their experiences of sexual harassment. Thus, it will be possible to examine the extent to which divergent attributions characterize perpetrators' and victims' experiences of sexual harassment.

Finally, the DoD survey also scrutinizes the issue of interpretation in cases of possible third party sexual harassment. Respondents are asked to rate the extent to which their negative reactions to the sexual behaviors of others were attributed to various possible reasons. These reasons include: fraternization, unfairness in employment decisions, unprofessionalism, inappropriateness on account of marital relationships, exploitation, personal sexual values, insensitivity to others, negligence of duties, distraction, decreased personal productivity, and decreased group productivity. It is not enough to know that respondents were bothered by the behaviors of others. In order to understand the problem of third party sexual harassment, it is necessary to know why these behaviors were perceived as bothersome.

## Conclusion .

Sexual harassment is a complex problem in the military and any other setting. A first step in reducing sexual harassment in the military is to identify some of the organizational and personal factors that are related to its occurrence. The proposed DoD survey will accomplish this initial goal. Based on the findings of the survey, the next step should be to develop organizational policies and training programs which will ultimately reduce sexual harassment.



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